

NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



23 APR 11 P1:01

SENATE
S.B. No. 2058

RECEIVED BY:

Introduced by **Senator Raffy T. Tulfo**

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11036, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "MENTAL HEALTH ACT", TO INCORPORATE PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADOLESCENTS DURING PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Mental Health and psychosocial support services for children and young adolescents during times of public health emergency: proposed amendment to republic act no. 11036, otherwise known as the "Mental Health Act"

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-ranging consequences for general physical and mental health and there is an urgent need for a comprehensive response to life after pandemic or living with the new normal. Children and adolescents who experience this phenomenon may come across short-term and long-term psychosocial and mental health effects.

The mental health of our children has been greatly affected as their inability to live normally was hampered by continuous lockdown and threats to safety and health. The closure of schools, postponement or cancellation of exams in around 70 countries, including high-stake final school exams, had exposed the youth and children to uncertainty, anxiety and stress. The shift to online classes increases the burden to our children as it has brought about certain concerns like technology issues, additional screen time, lack of motivation, and a sense of isolation. In addition, excessive use of these technologies has been linked to sleep schedule disruptions and developmental impairments.

During the early outset of the pandemic, the number of children and adolescents calling the hotlines and wanting to talk about their mental health has significantly increased. Data from the National Center for Mental Health (NCMH) detailed that the number of calls from children seeking help spiked by 347 percent from 3,178 in 2019 to 11,016 in 2020. The Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) said that it was alarming, given that 12.48 percent—or at least 1,375—of the total number of calls received last year were classified as suicide-related calls.

The younger groups being more susceptible to depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms and poorer psychological well-being has been adversely affected. While children are more vulnerable to these detriments, there remains the absence of unified and comprehensive strategies in mitigating the deterioration of the mental health of Filipino children.

There is a pressing need for planning longitudinal and developmental studies, and implementing evidence based elaborative plan of action to cater to the psychosocial and mental health needs of the vulnerable children and adolescents during pandemic as well as post pandemic.

It is anticipated that we will be faced with a mental health pandemic that will continue for years to come, even after effective treatments have been developed. Increase in rates of severe mental illnesses have often followed in the aftermath of other global crises

This proposed measure seeks to provide psychological interventions and psychosocial support for children and young adolescents to help them develop healthy coping mechanisms during public health emergencies. Measures to be undertaken when dealing with any form of crisis shall be ameliorated. This is in preparation to any form of crisis that the country may possibly experience in the coming years.

In view of the foregoing, the urgent passing of this bill is earnestly sought.



Raffy T. Tulfo

Senator

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HEALTH EMERGENCIES**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in
Congress assembled:*

1 **Section 1. Short Title.** - This act shall be known as the "Psychological
2 Services for Children and Young Adolescents during Public Health Emergencies
3 Amendment Act of 2023"

4 **Sec. 2. Amendment of Republic Act No. 11036.** - Republic Act No. 11036,
5 otherwise known as the "Mental Health Act", is hereby amended to incorporate the
6 following provisions:

7

8 Services for Children and Young Adolescents during Public Health Emergencies.

9 - The Department of Health shall provide psychological services for children and young
10 adolescents during public health emergencies, including but not limited to:

11 a. Free and accessible virtual or in-person counseling services;

12 b. Hotline services for children and young adolescents to access psychological
13 support;

- 1 c. Psychological first aid services for children and young adolescents affected by
2 the public health emergency;
- 3 d. Psychological interventions for children and young adolescents to cope with the
4 stress and anxiety caused by the public health emergency.
- 5

6 **Sec. 3. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** - The Department of Health
7 shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of this Act within
8 30 days from its effectivity.

9 **Sec. 4. Separability Clause.** - If any provision of this Act is declared
10 unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected shall remain in full force
11 and effect.

12 **Sec. 5. Repealing Clause.** - All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations, or
13 parts thereof, inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

14 **Sec. 6. Effectivity.** - This Act shall take effect 15 days after its publication in the
15 Official Gazette or in at least two (1) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,